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Father, Son Plead Guilty to Big Game Guiding Violations in Brooks Range

(ANCHORAGE, Alaska) – A father and son pleaded guilty in Anchorage District Court Tuesday to misdemeanor violations involving big game guiding in the Brooks Range in 2007. Michael C. Vanning Jr., 42, of Wash., was convicted of taking his clients to hunt where he couldn't legally conduct hunts because the area was registered under his father, Michael H. Vanning Sr., 62, of Idaho. The elder Vanning was convicted of falsifying records that deceptively showed he guided these hunting trips. In order to prevent an over harvest of game and an overcrowding of hunters, Alaska law prohibits big game guides from registering and operating in more than three guide use areas at a time. The younger Vanning was essentially operating in six guide use areas by using his father's three areas as well as his own, giving him an unfair competitive advantage over other lawfully operating guide businesses. The case was initiated by a Fairbanks-based Alaska Wildlife Trooper who contacted the younger Vanning and his guiding business employees near Chandalar Lake in August of 2007 after receiving a complaint of an aircraft harassing sheep.

As part of the deal, the younger Vanning pleaded to five counts of guiding outside his guide-use area. The older Vanning pleaded guilty to five counts of unsworn falsification. Other charges addressing proper licensing required for their guiding businesses, Gateway Guiding and Silver Star, were dropped in accordance to the plea deal. They were initially charged with a total of 22 big game guiding violations. The two were each fined \$7,000 with \$4,500 suspended. In addition, they were placed on two-years of probation with the threat of suspending their guiding licenses for two years. A Piper Supercub was seized during the investigation and forfeited by the court to the state of Alaska.

For additional information please contact Andrew Peterson with the Office of Special Prosecutions and Appeals at (907) 269-7948 or contact Alaska Wildlife Trooper Sgt. Scott Quist at (907)451-5350.